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Fifth Committee

Summary record of the 1st meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 1 October 2009, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Maurer ..... (Switzerland)
Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Ms. McLurg

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Organization of work (A/C.5/64/1; A/C.5/64/L.1)

1. **The Chairman** invited members to consider the proposed tentative and provisional programme of work of the Committee for the main part of the session. The tentative programme of work had been prepared on the basis of the list of agenda items allocated to the Committee by the General Assembly (A/C.5/64/1). The note on the status of preparedness of the relevant documentation for those items (A/C.5/64/L.1) did not reflect the reports issued or submitted since the date of its issuance. A separate list on the status of documentation would be issued for the first and second parts of the resumed session.

2. He wished to highlight some of the recommendations made by the General Committee in its first report (A/64/250), adopted by the Assembly at its 2nd plenary meeting. The Fifth Committee should complete its work for the main part of the session by 11 December 2009. In view of financial constraints, meetings of the Main Committees, including informal meetings, should start promptly at 10 a.m. and be adjourned by 6 p.m. The General Assembly had also decided, in accordance with past practice, to waive the requirement that at least one quarter of the members of a Main Committee should be present in order to declare a meeting open and to permit debate to proceed.

3. Efforts should be made to reduce the number and length of resolutions adopted, and resolutions should not contain requests for reports from the Secretary-General unless such reports were strictly necessary for the implementation of those resolutions or for the continued consideration of an item. Resolutions should also be more action-oriented. In addition, the Main Committees should merely take note of the reports of the Secretary-General or of subsidiary organs which did not require a decision by the Assembly and should neither debate nor adopt resolutions on them unless specifically requested to do so.

4. With regard to the programme budget, he drew attention to rule 153 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly on statements of programme budget implications and to paragraphs 12 and 13 of General Assembly decision 34/401 on the need to allow sufficient time for the Secretariat to prepare estimates of expenditure arising from draft resolutions and for the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and the Fifth Committee to consider such estimates. As noted in paragraph 36 of the report of the General Committee, in most cases more than 48 hours were required for the Secretary-General to review the programme budget implications of proposals before the Assembly. Accordingly, he urged delegations to convey to their colleagues in the other Main Committees the importance of ensuring timely consideration of and action on draft proposals with programme budget implications.

5. **Mr. Elhag** (Sudan), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the Committee's workload had become heavier than ever. It was therefore crucial that Member States receive all relevant documents within established time limits. While the Group of 77 and China welcomed recent improvements in that regard, it reiterated that the ability of Member States to prepare adequately for negotiations was still being hampered by the late issuance of documents.

6. The Group's readiness to consider any item in the programme of work was contingent on the availability of all relevant documents in all six official languages sufficiently in advance to allow it to coordinate its position. Consequently, it was only prepared to accept the tentative programme of work for the first week of the current session.

7. It was imperative to conduct negotiations in an inclusive and transparent manner. The Group was strongly opposed to decision-making in small groups, especially on issues relating to the budget, the scales of assessment and reform, and to the imposition of conditions on negotiations. Separate coordinators should be assigned for the negotiations on the regular-budget scale and the peacekeeping scale. The Group was also opposed to any practices that undermined the Committee's legitimacy and competency in administrative and budgetary matters. By respecting the existing negotiating mechanisms and the sovereign right of every Member State to pronounce on administrative and budgetary matters, the Committee would be able to adopt decisions that were in the interest of the Organization.

8. **Mr. Örnéus** (Sweden), speaking on behalf of the European Union; the candidate countries Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey; the stabilization and association process countries

Albania, Montenegro and Serbia; and, in addition, Armenia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, said that the Committee would address many complex and important issues at the current session, including both the regular-budget and peacekeeping scales of assessment for 2010-2012. In that connection, the European Union believed that developing a fair and more balanced way to share budgetary responsibilities was essential to the effective functioning of the Organization.

9. The European Union would study carefully the Secretary-General's proposed programme budget for the biennium 2010-2011 (A/64/6) with a view to achieving greater budgetary discipline and making the most effective use of resources, while still enabling the Organization to carry out its mandates. To that end, the European Union would continue to support the management reform process and efforts to modernize the Organization.

10. It should be possible for the Committee to complete its work by the scheduled deadline of 11 December 2009 without holding night and weekend meetings. In that connection, he stressed the importance of the timely issuance of documents in all official languages. Although there had been some improvement in that regard, important reports were still being issued late. The European Union would not discuss any reports submitted on or after 11 December 2009.

11. **Mr. Heller** (Mexico), speaking on behalf of the Rio Group, said that, owing to their limited capacities, developing countries continued to encounter difficulties in their efforts to mitigate the impact of the current economic and financial crises. The budget of the United Nations should take that into account by making more effective use of the Organization's resources without hindering its ability to carry out its mandates. The Organization should bolster its economic and social development activities and make every effort to allocate its budget equally among the three pillars of peace and security, development and human rights.

12. Although it had taken note of the Secretary-General's prudent approach in the proposed programme budget outline for the biennium 2010-2011 (A/63/600), the Rio Group was nonetheless concerned by the possible allocation of additional resources to projects not included in the budget outline that, if approved, would have significant programmatic and budgetary impact. The inclusion of new needs was, of course, subject to the approval of the General Assembly, in accordance with its resolutions 41/213 and 42/211. The Group agreed with the Advisory Committee that the proposed programme budget should have provided more information on major management issues and structural changes affecting the resource requirements. It should have also drawn a clear link between recent policy initiatives and resource requirements and provided a clear picture of the reform measures that had been taken, their budgetary implications and the efficiency gains derived from the implementation of those measures, as well as an assessment of progress in accomplishing the objectives.

13. The Group looked forward to seeing the results of the Office of Human Resources Management's evaluation of the Organization's recruitment system, as that exercise had led to the postponement of the 2009 national competitive examination. It also looked forward to learning how the Office of Human Resources Management intended to promote a more equitable geographical distribution of Professional posts, particularly those above the P-5 level.

14. With regard to the pattern of conferences, the Group looked forward to the results of the review that had been conducted by the Office of Internal Oversight Services into the circumstances that had led to insufficient conference services being put at the disposal of the Human Rights Council in 2009. It expected that the 13 universal periodic review outcome reports would be translated into all official languages, as agreed at the 2009 substantive session of the Committee on Conferences.

15. The issue of procurement was of the utmost importance to the Rio Group and it trusted that measures were being taken to strengthen further the internal control framework and to increase the participation of developing countries and countries with economies in transition in the bidding for United Nations procurement contracts, as called for in General Assembly resolution 62/269.

16. Stressing the importance of the work performed by the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean (UN-LiREC), he welcomed the Secretary-General's proposal to alleviate the Centre's financial constraints. The Rio Group also supported the

expeditious granting of the exemptions that had been requested under Article 19 of the Charter.

17. **Mr. Sial** (Pakistan) said that his delegation appreciated the balanced programme of work and the designation of coordinators to facilitate negotiations on the various agenda items. He noted that although several General Assembly resolutions emphasized that all documents should be issued in all six official languages six weeks before the opening of the session, failure to comply with those resolutions was now the rule rather than the exception. A significant proportion of important documents were now routinely issued late, and such delays had a serious impact on the quality of the Committee's deliberations. His delegation would like to see the early results of the measures contemplated by the Secretary-General to address the underlying causes of the problem.

18. Member States should request supplementary information from the Secretariat only when absolutely necessary in order to reduce the workload of the Secretariat and smaller delegations and to control the cost of document production.

19. At the sixty-third session, under intense political pressure, the Fifth Committee had been forced to deal with important issues, including peacekeeping budgets, at the last minute. In order to avoid repeating that exercise, it was imperative for the Committee to conclude its work within the time allotted by engaging in informal consultations in a spirit of cooperation and mutual understanding.

20. In view of the strategic value of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2010-2011 and the scales of assessment, he stressed the need to allocate sufficient time for extensive deliberations. A spirit of transparency and inclusiveness should prevail during negotiations on all items. His delegation wished to reiterate its opposition to decision-making in small groups, especially on issues relating to the budget, the scales of assessment and reform, and to imposing any conditions on the budget negotiations.

21. **Mr. Melrose** (United States of America) said that his delegation looked forward to working constructively with other delegations at the current session.

22. **The Chairman** said he took it that the Committee approved the proposed tentative and provisional programme of work on the understanding that the Bureau would take into account the views expressed and make the necessary adjustments.

23. *It was so decided.*

24. **The Chairman** suggested that a deadline of 20 October should be set for the submission of candidatures for appointments to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other appointments and that the elections should be held on 6 November.

The meeting rose at 11 a.m.